

# Sustainable Development Law & Policy

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## Editors' Note

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# EDITORS' NOTE

We are very excited to present this Spring Issue of Sustainable Development Law & Policy (SDLP) focusing on the Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development taking place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil this June 13-22, 2012.<sup>1</sup> For many veterans of the field, it may seem hard to believe that twenty years has passed since the 1992 Earth Summit.<sup>2</sup> As burgeoning environmental lawyers and policy-makers at SDLP, however, it is similarly strange for us to think of a world without that momentous conference. After all, much of the progress and frameworks of modern environmental law rest on the shoulders of the Earth Summit.

The 1992 conference saw the Convention on Biological Diversity open for signature, marking an international structure to protect the planet's ecosystems, species, and genetic resources.<sup>3</sup> It also saw the inception of the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change and the consequential first steps toward the modern international climate regime.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, the Rio Declaration and its principles memorialized international acknowledgement of what have now become core tenants of environmental law, including the precautionary principle, the environmental impact assessment, the importance of

## FEATURES:

21 | COMPULSORY LICENSING IN TRIPS: CHINESE AND INDIAN COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGE IN THE MANUFACTURE AND EXPORTATION OF GREEN TECHNOLOGIES

by Rishi R. Gupta

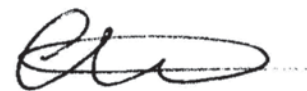
public participation, and international cooperation to achieve national capacity building.<sup>5</sup>

Most notable for SDLP, however, was the Earth Summit's international acknowledgement and integration of the principle of sustainable development.<sup>6</sup> As the fundamental focus of this publication, sustainable development guides our every article. In this issue, we seek to examine both the Earth Summit's past successes and current opportunities for further progress at the upcoming Rio +20 conference. The articles herein look forward and back to identify ways in which this upcoming conference can serve its twin aims of fostering a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication and building the institutional framework for sustainable development.<sup>7</sup>

As nations prepare to re-convene this coming June 2012 at the Rio +20 conference, debate, discussion, and collaboration among the international environmental community will only increase. This issue of SDLP contributes to this dialogue with the sincere hope that it will aid in the further progress of sustainable development law and policy at the anticipated Rio +20 conference.



Braunsen Virjee



Chelsea Tu

<sup>1</sup> Rio+20 — United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, United Nations, <http://www.uncsd2012.org>.

<sup>2</sup> United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (1992), United Nations, <http://www.un.org/geninfo/bp/enviro.html>.

<sup>3</sup> Convention on Biological Diversity, June 5, 1992, 31 I.L.M. 818, <http://www.cbd.int/doc/legal/cbd-en.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> See United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, May 9, 1992, 1771 U.N.T.S. 107, <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/convkp/conveng.pdf>. See also GRACIELA CHICHILNISKY & KRISTEN A. SHEERAN, SAVING KYOTO 56-57 (Kate Parker ed., 2009); DAVID HUNTER ET AL., INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL LAW AND POLICY 667-74 (Robert C. Clark et al. eds., 2007).

<sup>5</sup> U.N. Conference on Environment and Development, June 13-14, 1992, Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, U.N. Doc. A/CONF.151/26, <http://www.unep.org/Documents.Multilingual/Default.asp?DocumentID=78&ArticleID=1163>.

<sup>6</sup> *Id.*

<sup>7</sup> *Objective & Themes*, Rio+20 — United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, United Nations, <http://www.uncsd2012.org/objectiveandthemes.html>.